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How the evolution of Fashion Week has affected photographers

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New York Fashion Week (NYFW) is one of the most photographed and exclusive events in the world. Access was once reserved to editors and buyers, while the general public waited weeks to see the latest trends in glossy magazines.

Now the fashion industry is presenting collections with one goal in mind: creating Instagrammable moments.

With social media controlling the narrative and creative direction, capturing experimental setups and shows are presenting a challenge for fashion photographers.

NYFW has become decentralized, less focused and unconventional a complete 180 from what it was years ago.

Uptown to all-over-town

For 16 years NYFW took place inside Bryant Park under its famous white tents. And after that, it was located at Lincoln Center for several years.

Having it at one location created an almost familial vibe and made it easier to get from one show to the next.

These days, the event no longer has a single home. Instead, it is a decentralized approach with shows at a variety of different venues such as the New York subway, Park Avenue's Armory, the old New York City Farley Post Office, South Street Seaport and Harlem's iconic Apollo Theatre.

While these different locations create buzz and provide different aesthetics that may benefit the designer and sometimes make for interesting images it also can present challenges such as lugging equipment back and forth and struggling to get a cab to make it to each show in a timely fashion.

Front row evolution

In the pre-Instagram days, exclusivity was baked into all facets of fashion week.

Black-clad editors and top celebrities reigned supreme. They sat at the front row of every show, while bloggers sat or

...and top celebrities reigned supreme; they sat at the front of every show, while bloggers sat or stood behind the back seats.

In the late 2000s, things changed dramatically.

Suddenly, bloggers started getting front row tickets and were competing with each other to see which look from the new collection they were going to wear to be photographed on the streets outside the shows.

Designers saw a big marketing opportunity here and began to capitalize on it.

Influencers have now dominated what was once an event reserved for the fashion elite, and now that they have become the norm in the front row, photographers are having a difficult time recognizing all the new faces.

Back in the 1990s and early 2000s, photographers were accustomed to looking for identifiable celebrities and the obvious people in the crowd to photograph.

Photographers versus the camera phone

Back in the day, the job of the photographer was much more specific. Go in and tell the story. Now, they are multitasking by taking pictures, capturing video, and using phones for social media platforms.

Also, designers are relying more on the platforms of influencers to generate buzz and less on print and traditional press outlets.

Social media has definitely been a game-changer.

Since commentary and images can be obtained virtually instantaneously, a lot of emphasis gets placed on speed as opposed to the creative aspects of the image itself. It is possible to have both speed and quality, but it is much harder and something that was never considered before.

Today "everyone is a photographer" with the ubiquity of mobile phones, which is actually a blessing in disguise.

The new platforms provide endless amounts of inspiration and the ability to share images in ways not possible 10 years ago challenges photographers to be the best they can be.

THE ROLE OF the photographer is undergoing a huge transformation.

While there may be more obstacles for photographers at Fashion Week, one thing is for sure: there is still a high demand for the designs coming out of the shows and everyone wants to be in on the glamour.

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